

# THOMAS GIFFORD

*New York Times*

**BESTSELLING AUTHOR**

## *The Glendower Legacy*



# Contents

Cover  
About the Book  
About the Author  
Title Page  
Copyright Page  
Prologue

Bucharest: December 1975

Moscow: February 1976

Boston: March 1976

Monday

Wednesday

Thursday

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday/Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Epilogue

Cambridge

Florida

Looking for more suspense?

# About the Book

## **Ancient treason threatens to ignite a new skirmish in the Cold War.**

It's January, 1778, and William Davis is standing guard for the Continental Army at Valley Forge when he witnesses something sickening: an American selling intelligence to the British. The meeting goes wrong, three men die, and William flees the scene, leaving a swatch of his uniform behind. The next day he's arrested, tried, and executed for treason as part of a monstrous cover-up to protect the identity of the officer who tried to sell out the American Revolution: General George Washington himself.

Two centuries later, a descendent of Davis finds evidence of Washington's betrayal. Before he can announce his findings, he's murdered by KGB agents hoping to use the information to embarrass the United States. But the crucial document vanishes, and the only man who can secure it is Nat Underhill, a Harvard professor who truly must publish or perish.

### Review Quote:

"A roller coaster ride of electrifying adventure and chilling suspense." - *The Philadelphia Bulletin*

"Escape reading at its best." - *The New York Times*

"One of the most robust and intelligent thriller writers of the past two decades." - *Publishers Weekly*

# About the Author

Thomas Gifford (1937-2000) was a bestselling author of thriller novels. Born in Dubuque, Iowa, he moved to Minnesota after graduating from Harvard. After eight years as a traveling textbook salesman, he wrote *Benchwarmer Bob* (1974), a biography of Minnesota Vikings defensive end Bob Lurtsema. *The Wind Chill Factor* (1975), a novel about dark dealings among ex-Nazis, introduced John Cooper, a character Gifford would revisit in *The First Sacrifice* (1994). *The Wind Chill Factor* was one of several books Gifford set in and around Minneapolis.

Gifford won an Edgar Award nomination for *The Cavanaugh Quest* (1976). *The Glendower Legacy* (1978), a story about an academic who discovers that George Washington may have been a British spy, was adapted for the film *Dirty Tricks* (1981), starring Elliott Gould. In the 1980s Gifford wrote suspense novels under the pen names Thomas Maxwell and Dana Clarins. In 1996 he moved back to Dubuque to renovate his childhood home. He died of cancer in 2000.

# **The Glendower Legacy**

**Thomas Gifford**



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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

For Rachel and Tom

I am not I;  
he is not he;  
they are not they.



*Glendower*

I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

*Hotspur*

Why, so can I, or so can any man;

But will they come when you do call for them?

*Glendower*

Why, I can teach you, cousin, to command

The devil.

*Hotspur*

And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the devil

By telling the truth; tell truth and shame the devil.

If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither,

And I'll be sworn I have power to shame him

hence.

O, while you live, tell truth and shame the devil!

Shakespeare

Henry IV, Part I

## ***Prologue***

**Valley Forge: January 1778**

WILLIAM DAVIS STOOD SENTRY DUTY ankle-deep in the crusty snow, watching the moon slide out from behind the clouds long enough to give the slopes above the Schuylkill River an eerie, metallic grayness—a bright, unearthly gray he'd never seen before. He shook his head: you couldn't touch a color, he knew that, but this gray was something else, it was alive. But that was crazy. The hunger did bad things, not just to your guts but inside your head, too. He listened to his stomach rattle, empty but for the godawful firecake and rice ... Firecake, invented in hell and sent by personal messenger to Valley Forge, a little flour, a lot of water, baked brittle and indigestible as a skimming stone on hot flat rocks. A bit of rice flavored with vinegar to keep away the scurvy.

Yet he knew he was one of the lucky ones: he had shoes, his feet were still feet, not bloody lumps dangling from scrawny ankles gone black with frostbite and gangrene, and he had a decent heavy coat, more new than old, sent him by his father back in Cambridge. He sighed and felt the breath crystallize on his moustache, in the hairs of his nostrils. His face felt like glass when he touched it. With the thick coat studded with heavy brass buttons he may well have been the best-dressed common soldier in the encampment, though the garment was already soaking up the thick smoke which hung impenetrably in each of the cabins built since their arrival on the bluffs above the Schuylkill ... He dug his toenails into the soles of his boots until he was clenching his teeth against the pain.

God, how he hated the smoke and the cold and the firecake!

A thousand cabins had been built with axes the only tools. The thatched roofs leaked, the dirt floors never warmed, the green wood they used for fires was as bad as a smudge pot hurled by redcoats into each cabin ...

But still he was not so badly off. His friend, Ben Edwards, twenty-two just like himself, had been without shoes, had stood guard with his raw feet in his hat, had fallen ill with the dysentery which had done for him a week ago ... they had amputated his blackened, frozen legs before he'd died but it had been almost for practice. No way could poor old Ben have made it. The dysentery was so bad, it was everywhere, the cabins reeked of the godawful watery shit of the lads whose lives were draining right damn out of them.

The moon was gone again and the cloud cover looked suddenly thicker, permanent, making it a very dark night with only the wind shrieking against the tree line. He had to take a piss. He looked toward the thick stand of trees. He sure as hell wasn't going to take a piss out here in the wind. He'd heard tell, in fact, of a man with a frozen thing—he'd heard tell it had just plain fallen off. He didn't know if that was a true story but there was no point in finding out by personal test.

No, it could be worse, it was worse all around him. He had developed a case of the scabies, though, and when he scratched at himself he thought of the scabies as his war wounds. The only treatment was to have a friend rub your body with the stinking mixture of sulfur and tallow. Christ! Would he ever lie naked with a girl again? It surely seemed impossible while you were standing out in the cold feeling the sulfur and tallow half freeze on your chest and back. Yet, he smiled and heard his beard crackle, he was better off than most. You had to keep remembering that and it wasn't always easy. Shit, there was a time at Germantown when he'd thought he was a goner for sure ...

But to serve under General Washington, well, that was worth a lot of agony. That thought had gotten him through many a bad night and many a tough scrape, stories he'd someday tell his grandchildren ... stories of the days he'd served in Washington's army. What a man old George was!

William had first seen him at Cambridge Common, a large, broad-bottomed, muscular figure, looking the way a soldier who would ask you to follow him into battle should look ... almost a man to hide behind if the going got too tough.

He finally pushed off, sinking through the jagged snow with each step, toward the black mass of trees. The wind moaned the closer he got. He remembered how the dark forest used to frighten him as a boy back in Massachusetts. Now all it meant was shelter from the wind and a place to release himself. He grinned at the recollection of boyhood, heard his beard tinkle like breaking glass.

Oh, hell, he knew what some of his fellows said about Washington, the barbs and insults and rude behind-the-back gestures and unjust criticisms. He'd heard them all and he'd like to see them say it to old George's face! Most of the dumb bastards couldn't even read or write! Let 'em carp, damn fools ... He'd heard other, wiser men say that no other army on earth could have stuck it out the way Washington and his men had. They'd earned the respect of the world, he'd heard them say. By jiminy, that told you all you needed to know about George Washington.

He did his business, felt his body relax out of the wind's battering. Snow blew across the crust, rattled in the night, sifted among the trees. Nothing else moved along the tree line. He kicked a tree trunk, keeping the blood circulating. It was better sheltering there out of the wind. He felt in his pocket for his pipe, remembered he had run out of tobacco, stared into the darkness of the small forest that seemed so large. His eyes were adjusting to the deeper blue-black. Maybe a brief reconnaissance mission into the inviting shelter was called for: he wasn't quite certain who he was guarding against out here in the cold but whoever, wouldn't they be most likely to gather in the woods?

He picked up his musket which he'd rested against a trunk. It was like descending into a cave, the deep blue-blackness smelling only of the cold and snow closing in

around him. Thirty yards into it he looked back but there was nothing to see, only darkness. Above him, glimpsed among the treetops, the clouds were only a shade or two toward gray. The fear he felt in his chest took him by surprise. He stopped, wiped clammy sweat from his forehead, and blinked. He'd heard of men getting lost in thickets, running themselves to death, hurtling wildly, breathlessly in circles until they fell and froze ...

But panic wasn't in his nature. He knew he was ten minutes from the tree line and he felt he could calmly feel his way back by following his tracks. He breathed deeply, peered around him.

That was when he first smelled smoke. He was too far from the encampment to smell those fires ... He sniffed, closing his eyes. The wind that penetrated the woods carried the scent; as he turned, trying to judge the direction from which it came, it grew stronger. It was coming from deeper into the woods, no question of that, and his curiosity bloomed like a night flower. Who the devil could it be? Maybe one of the lads had wandered off, gotten lost, needed help. It was farfetched, but then Valley Forge was farfetched. He moved on toward the smell of smoke, forgetting the fears of a few moments before.

Another ten minutes of slow going and he stopped again. The smell was markedly stronger; William Davis was markedly tired. He rested for a moment, then looked as determinedly as he could toward the apparent source of the smoke. Through the phalanx of trees he glimpsed for an instant a flickering flame, tiny, almost imperceptible but, yes, he was sure it was there. He was husbanding his strength, saw no reason to cry out. In any case, he was still too far away and the wind had picked up. He pushed on, the musket growing heavier with each step.

Moving closer he picked out shadows moving among the trees as the little gusts caught the fire, pushed it this way and that. Wind swirled around him as he picked his way

through the snow which was softer in the woods, finer, not so deep. Next, much to his surprise, he caught snatches of conversation, voices borne on the wind, then gone, then back again ... It obviously wasn't some poor bastard who'd wandered off and gotten lost. There were several voices. He heard laughter, then the wind shifted and he was left in silence. But the glow of the fire was brighter and the trees were thinning. There was a small clearing ahead of him. He pushed closer, moving stealthily though he couldn't have said precisely why.

He stopped at last at the edge of the clearing, still hidden in the darkness. There were three—no, four—men, large and bulky in greatcoats, standing and sitting around a fire in the shelter provided by a large lean-to. Their faces were obscured by shadow. They seemed intent on their discussion. As he watched he was conscious of sweat soaking his long underwear, turning it wet and cold against his flesh, making the damnable scabies itch like bites. He wasn't sure what to do but he was quite sure of two things: he was inexplicably afraid and he wanted very much to find out who these men were ...

All four were now seated. One of them pitched another log onto the fire. Unexpectedly the wind died. The silence brushed their voices closer, but he was concerned only with the sound of his own breathing which struck him as deafening. He held a glove to his mouth, sunk his teeth into it, half gagging. Words came to him from the men, words he could just distinguish without grasping their meaning.

He could not make out the color or markings on their greatcoats; everything looked uniformly black at this distance, in the shifting, blowing campfire light. But seeing the coats wasn't necessary. He bit down harder on the glove, feeling his heart hammering, afraid. They were English, he'd have bet his life on it. He knew the accents: sure, the colonial gentry had that English sound when they spoke and many of them were as loyal as he was himself

but the real English, from England, had a different sound. There was no mistaking it: he'd heard them all his life in Boston and he knew an Englishman's voice. At least three of them were English but the fourth, a large squatting figure, close to the fire with his back to William, might have been anyone. He hadn't spoken so far as William could tell, hadn't moved except to reach forward and poke at the fire. He seemed to be listening, staring intently at the fire, while the others talked.

What in God's name had he stumbled on? Was it the beginning of a surprise winter attack? The men had been told such a thing was impossible, that the winter was as cold for the Redcoats as for themselves ... but what did a twenty-two-year-old foot soldier know about such things? It was all rumor and made-up stories and outright lies—maybe this was the beginning and, God forbid, maybe he was going to be the first victim ...

He couldn't hear the question but the squatting figure spoke, still looking at the fire. The other three stood or sat watching him, the firelight flickering on their featureless faces. He was an American.

"And how do *you* think the army is? Cold, starving, dying of dysentery, frightened. *I* am frightened myself, dealing with such as you ... A knife in the back for my reward ... That's what frightens me, sir!" He spoke strongly and the words carried across the clearing, frustration and dark anger held only just in check. "You ask for information, you demand particulars—Heaven forbid! Look about you! General Winter, sir ... An army of untrained citizens, without even the meagerest supplies—"

One of the Englishmen said something while another laughed. There was sympathy in the laughter, as if the man were afraid of further angering the American.

"No, damn you," the squatting man said. "Do you think me mad? Deliver the army! Am I come so low as this, dealing with imbeciles?" He threw the log in his left hand



into the fire. Sparks showered, flared. "No, I will not—*cannot*—deliver the Continental army! How can one man deliver an army, even such an army as this? There are great and honest men who will choose to fight to the death—brave men. Men who believe we can outlast you ... And you, sirs, lead me to think they may be right, after all—"

"And you, my man," one of the Englishmen said sharply, "are in too deep to harbor such a thought! Remember your role in this, if you please."

"Why try to frighten me? I am well past that ... all that frightens me is your treachery. The knife in the dark ... I'd almost welcome it, sir, and believe me, I'm hard to kill. I'd get a hand on you, sir, and you'd be dead afore me!"

"Come, come," a peacemaker said. "This is pointless ..."

"Remember, I'm not a joking man," the American said. "This is serious business." He paused still without even shifting on his haunches. "Whatever you may think, I am trying to save this land—from defeat, from scoundrels and jackals. You understand me not ... my motives are beyond you. We can use each other and I bear it. Only just."

"You cannot deliver the army," the peacemaker said. "We realize that ... not even—well, no one can deliver an army."

"The point is, it's not worth delivering, don't you see that? That kind of thing would only increase your problems. We must appear to fight to an honorable peace, not quite a surrender, but a peace on your terms—your *generous* terms. Then old King George can sleep soundly again. Not before ..."

"Your own sleep will not be exactly troubled ..." The harshest of the three Englishmen stood over the squatting figure. "You will be rewarded, as you damned well know—"

"It's a dice roll. Your word means nothing to me—my reward is to see the country whole again, at peace with the crown ... a crown that understands her children ..."

"I daresay you will not reject our offerings." He stalked away toward the trees where William was standing. He stood stock still, watched as the man stopped and wheeled abruptly back toward the fire. William shook with the enormity of what he was witnessing. Treason ... somehow, he had to see the crouching man whose shape blotted out the fire. The army and Washington himself were being sold out by this man, this shape without a face whose voice was distorted by the shifting winds in the snowy clearing. He was torn: to get away from this place—but to see the man, the traitor.

"You must sign these papers," the returning Englishman said. "We must have them as security—"

"Blackmail, that is the word, sir!"

"As you will. You must sign." He spread the sheets on a campaign stool and drew a writing case from the folds of his greatcoat. The warmth of his body must have kept the ink from freezing. "Your code name—this acknowledges your code name. *Glendower* ... Just put the signature on it. You've done it before." He laughed scornfully, placing the ink and pen on the camp stool.

William willed the American to turn around, to reveal himself, though in the shadowy light he might not have been able to make out the features for future identification. In any case, the man remained hunched over.

At precisely that moment, as the pen was being handed back to the argumentative Englishman, the sound of cracking branches and heavy footfalls reached both William Davis and the four men in the clearing. William turned too quickly to see who it might be, tripped over the musket, and fell with a gasp to his knees. The large American turned at the sound of William's falling and the Englishmen looked off toward his right where the other sounds seemed to be coming from.

A cry came from the new arrivals who crashed and blundered through the trees and underbrush: "Hey! Who is

it? Is it you, Harry?" It made no sense to William but the large man, the American, was fumbling in his coat for a pistol which came quickly to view, huge, in his hand. He was pointing it toward William who grabbed his musket, spit out the glove, and struggled to crawl behind a tree. "God damn it! We're surrounded ..." As the American spoke he fired a ball at William who heard it smash into the tree about a foot from his face, splinters flying. The angry flash from the pistol briefly illuminated the man's face but William was ducking, saw only the pinkness of the face, none of what it signified. He felt his almost empty bladder let loose in his trousers. The man was reloading, coming toward him, but the cries of the newcomers stopped him. Two men broke into the clearing, one of the Englishmen fired point-blank into a face before him and a godawful screech pierced the heavy quiet. The man staggered back, moaning, hands to what had been his face, and fell dead in the snow, his feet jerking. The Englishmen and the traitor fled back across the clearing, kicking the fire to embers in the snow. The soldiers, encumbered by their muskets which weren't much good at close range, stumbled clumsily after them, shouting. Another pistol shot exploded as the conspirators reached the tree line across the clearing. No one fell and the sounds of several men crashing through the underbrush filled the night. As if by magic the clearing was empty but for the dead Continental.

Reacting instinctively, William darted across the twenty-five feet of open space to the dying campfire and picked up the piece of paper from the stool, felt it catch on a splinter and tear. Afraid to wait he stuffed what he had into his pocket, turned and caught his coat on a sharp edge jutting out from the lean-to. Driven by fear he desperately yanked away, heard his coat rip, and charged back into the covering darkness of the trees. He couldn't find his musket; he must have missed the exact spot—he heard from the darkness another explosion followed by a strangled cry and

a shout, "Over here, over here!" Another explosion cut the voice, separated it from life with awesome abruptness. All of the firing had been from pistols: the Continentals were reduced by three and not a musket had been fired. He didn't know how many of them there were but going back to look for Harry, whoever he was, had cost them their lives.

Afraid to move, he leaned against a tree feeling his wet trouserfront freeze stiff. He heard no more skirmishing but the sounds growing faint of what he assumed were his comrades—what was left of them—escaping back through the woods. What must they think, he wondered. Three men dead—Christ, what to do? How had the quiet night turned into this? He shook uncontrollably, like a man with a fever.

Were the men he spied on gone for good? He hardly thought so: they'd taken nothing with them when they'd fled. But where were they? He had to wait. He couldn't face the risk of running into them in the dark; obviously they thought nothing of killing ... He couldn't fall asleep for fear of freezing to death, he couldn't move for fear of signaling his position. He sat finally, waited. It must have been an hour before he heard them returning from across the clearing. At their first sounds he began his own stealthy departure. He'd vomited on his sleeve. He smelled himself. No musket, a torn coat, a scrap of paper in his pocket, trousers frozen with piss, witness to three murders and high treason ...

And the fear had just begun.

The next day William Davis was asked nothing about his lost musket. It was a large encampment intent on surviving, not fighting. He heard rumors about three newly missing men but there was no official announcement, just vague rumors nobody cared much about. There had been no bodies found: William surmised that the three dead men were being written off as deserters, which was precisely

what their terrified companions had actually done—deserted, gone home, leaving Valley Forge behind them.

William pondered what to do. Could he tell anyone, without proof? Then he remembered the piece of paper which was still in his trouser pocket. Alone, he peeled it loose and looked at the words, smudged and soiled but still legible. All but the top corner of the sheet had survived. He read it, his Vision hazy from the constant feeling of dizziness, and felt himself go faint, his legs soften.

He couldn't cope with it. He couldn't show it to anyone. He couldn't go to General Washington's headquarters, he couldn't take it to Captain Whittaker, he dared not show it to anyone—not until he'd thought it through. Surely, it couldn't be true ... but he'd seen it happen and, by God, now he recognized the shape coming toward him with the drawn pistol. He saw it again and again when he closed his eyes, the featureless face in the flare of the pistol shot.

Befuddled and exhausted, he tied the sheet of paper along with letters from his mother to the back of a framed portrait of her which he kept at the bottom of his small kit bag. He had no place else to hide something. Then he told his bunkmate, John Higgins, to make sure his few personal effects reached his family in Cambridge should he fall victim to the dread dysentery or expire in any other way. Death was everywhere, all around him. He grew depressed as the day wore on, found himself unable to eat. He felt as if a rat were gnawing at his bowels. What was he meant to do with such an unbelievable piece of information?

That night he couldn't sleep. Past midnight, his guts in an unholy uproar, he wrapped his torn coat around his shivering body, pushed his way past his sleeping mates sprawled here and there in the cabin, went outside coughing from the ever-present smoke. He wiped soot from his eyes, felt the tallow and sulfur congealing on his flesh the moment he left the cabin. It was dark as he paced numbly through the alleyways of frozen, rutted mud and

snow toward the latrine. A hard wind took his breath away as he leaned forward. At first he didn't see the two men who stepped from the shadows into his path.

"Soldier," one of them said, a soldier he'd noticed walking beside him earlier in the day. "Soldier, stand!" the man said softly. The voice was insistent. The second figure joined him, something fluttering in his outstretched hand.

"What?" William Davis said. "I've got to get to the latrine—"

"Tell us, is this yours, soldier?" The second man held out the torn shred of heavy cloth. The brass button caught the light of a torch across the way. "Take a closer look, soldier ..."

"It's mine—I tore my coat. ..." He was having trouble focusing his eyes. He hated it but he thought he knew what was happening inside his body: fever, unable to eat, the latrine half a dozen times that day. The significance of the torn coat escaped him until it was too late. He felt the hand clamp like a vise on his arm, couldn't resist as he was pulled into the darkness.

William Davis's body wasn't found until spring when the snow in the deep woods melted. By then no one really cared; so many men had died. No one ever noticed the stab wounds in the thawed, bloated, distended corpse.

Only the officers in charge that winter, living in the stone farmhouses, had known the truth: that William Davis had been a proven traitor, that he had consorted with British spies in the woods, and that he had been undone by a scrap of cloth left behind when he fled the scene of his treason. Only the officers in charge knew that his summary execution had been decreed to save the army a blow to morale which might have been the final cause of its disintegration.

And one officer—only one—knew an even greater truth which would forever remain buried with the ghastly remains of young William Davis.

***Bucharest: December 1973***

NAT UNDERHILL HAD NEVER REALLY expected to see Bucharest again, not after fifty years, but here he was pushing eighty and there was the old city below his hotel window, dusted with a dry snowfall that blew like smoke in the grayness of late afternoon. No, he still couldn't quite believe it, that he'd lived to see Bucharest again. He lit his old black pipe, tasted the Louisburg Square mixture he'd smoked for years, heaved a mighty sigh of relief and satisfaction, snapped his braces, and let his mind wander toward the past, beyond his reflection in the streaked pane of glass.

Night was falling sharply, like a shade being yanked down for privacy, and it could have been the city of half a century before. He'd been a student at the time, researching Transylvanian history, and he'd fallen in love with Bucharest, the night life of the cafes, dining at midnight, the almost Spanish feeling of the city without the implied cruelty he'd found in Spain. But, in fact, it wasn't entirely the city which had smitten him, but a fetching Romanian girl with well-to-do and vaguely aristocratic parents. The war and the Russians had erased them like irrelevant markings on a blackboard, leaving Nat Underhill with something approaching a broken heart, one of life's loose ends which seems so important at the time.

But the war had replaced the girl in his thoughts. He had been stationed in London where there were, however, a good many other Romanians. They'd all made pledges to see one another when it was all over, when—as Vera Lynn sang—the world was free. But, of course, they never did. History had never been kind to the Romanians, and the post-World War II era had been no different from any other. Boston and Bucharest seemed hardly to be points on the same planet.

In time, things changed. In the course of his various historical researches he had discovered the world of books,



letters, journals, documents, and diaries. Not so much the reading of them—although he read them, too—but the buying, selling, and collecting of them. Coincidence worked its way with his life, and fifty years later two specific events had conspired to bring him back to Bucharest for a bittersweet farewell.

First, there had been the announcement of the convention of antiquarians set for the Christmas holidays in Bucharest—certainly an example of Romania's reaching out toward the West. But he'd needed an excuse to attend; simply seeing the city again was not enough for his frugal New England soul.

Then the Davis boy had come to see him in his elegant, cluttered little shop, tucked away on Beacon Hill literally within a stone's throw of the State House. Bill Davis was a Harvard student, stringy long hair, gold wire-rimmed spectacles, not at all designed to appeal to Nat Underhill's Brooks Brothers aplomb. However, hideously scruffy appearance notwithstanding, the Davis boy had come bearing so incredible a piece of paper that Nat Underhill had required a chair and an immediate fresh-brewed cup of English Breakfast tea.

Was it genuine, the boy had wanted to know. Was there any way to be sure?

As to the document's age, yes, of course there were ways to authenticate it. As to the validity of the contents—historically speaking—that was something else again, falling within the purview of the trained historian and the handwriting analyst. But there had been a feeling in his stuffy little office that morning, a feeling wholly unlike anything else his profession had ever produced. His heart had beaten oddly. His dry wrinkled hands had shaken when he touched the document itself. His mouth had dried up. In all of the years he'd spent in the company of antique bits of paper he'd never seen anything to match it. Never ...

Having urged the lad to put the prize in a safe deposit box after showing it to his most trusted professor—and Harvard's Colin Chandler was preeminent in the field—Nat settled back in his creaking swivel chair and watched the late autumn wind whipping at the politicians who seemed to spend their days hurrying back and forth past his office window conducting the affairs of the Commonwealth. As of that moment, Bucharest was a most reasonable destination. Such a document, dating from the winter of 1778, was almost beyond simple monetary value ... but one would be required to set a figure. But even its very existence would create a storm of interest and debate. And even more than that there was the satisfaction to be derived, the opportunity to place a capstone on his career. That was beyond valuation of any kind. He would now become a footnote in the history books—no, considerably more than that. He smiled. Puffing a pipe, smoke swirling around his head, he arranged for his flight to Basel and the train accommodations thereafter, as well as the reservation at the Athénée-Palace in Bucharest.

Nat had debated when to unveil his spectacular find: he wanted it to be cast in the proper setting, a climax to the week. Europeans were not easy to impress when it came to historical documents, their own histories being so much lengthier and therefore richer than Nat Underhill's. But they were knowledgeable, they knew American history, and the photocopy of the document he had in his possession would astound them, even if it wasn't a thousand years old. It was the sort of thing men in their profession dreamed about, more often than not went a lifetime without ever once finding—the document he was thinking of himself as agent for wasn't simply a nice, bold reinforcement of history ... this one *changed* history!

The final night of his stay in Bucharest was obviously the time. He arranged for a group of his old friends to dine as his guests at a warm, dark, odiferous cellar restaurant

he remembered unchanged from the thirties. There were six of them, as well as a young Romanian called Grigorescu who had ingratiated himself with the older men during the weeks, acting as an informal guide to the new Bucharest. Grigorescu was not yet thirty, full-faced, pale, always seeming somewhat overheated in his sweater and a suitcoat straining its seams. His complexion tended to pastiness with deep-set, cavernously shadowed eyes: he reminded Nat Underhill of certain blind men. But he was quiet, helpful, nervous, anxious to please and gather in the wisdom of the elderly westerners.

Crowded around a large corner table, shoulder to shoulder and made especially convivial by the heat and the rich Romanian red wines, they smoked and relived the past and ate plates of *mamaliga* and the tiny skewered meatballs called *mititei* and sausage and steak and the sour soup and devastatingly heavy casserole, leaned back exhausted with fruit and cheese and *tzuica*. They toasted Nat Underhill, teasing him about his advanced age though three of them were past seventy themselves. Grigorescu smiled shyly, perspired, wiped his forehead, listened, interpreted specifics with the waiter. Finally they lit their pipes and cigars and Nat Underhill looked around at their faces. Then he withdrew a plain envelope from his pocket and tapped it on the wine-stained tablecloth. The candles had burned low, wax melting in ornate patterns, dripping.

"Gentlemen," Nat Underhill said, "I have a story to tell you ... An example of the sort of wonders lurking around each corner in our line of work. You never know, Grigorescu, what may happen tomorrow. You are just beginning ... and I am nearing the end, but Fate can take any one of us by the hand at any time." The fat young man nodded solemnly. "Less than a month ago Fate brought me the most remarkable document of my life ..." He waved the envelope slowly before him, like a conjurer about to produce a rabbit from someone's ear. "It came out of the

blue ... and it will force a rewriting of the history of the American revolutionary war! Nothing less ... and you know me, I have never been given to hyperbole. Let me explain ..."

When he was done with the story he passed the photocopy around the table. He recognized true admiration in their faces: such men didn't show it often and when they did there wasn't a doubt. He smiled watching them. This was the payoff, the closest any antiquarian could come to a Nobel: the sincere, unspoken praise of his fellows.

They said their farewells in the grand lobby of the Athénée-Palace. Nat was checking out early in the morning. Some of his colleagues he'd be seeing in New York come spring, others—most particularly young Grigorescu—he would surely never see again. He slapped the Romanian on the back, shook his moist hand repeatedly, and tottered off to bed. Nat Underhill had never, all things considered, been happier than that winter night in Bucharest with the wind rattling the windows of his bedchamber and the radiators banging.

***Moscow: February 1976***

MAXIM PETROV, DIRECTOR OF THE Komitet Gossudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti, arrived for work in a good mood. The carburetor problem on his black Zil limousine, a car worth seventy-five thousand dollars which he felt justified in thinking should work regardless of the temperature outdoors, had at last been solved. His chauffeur was for once in a halfway decent mood, and his wife had been in an excellent frame of mind. She was going shopping at No. 2 Granovsky, The Bureau of Passes, where she had promised to pick him up a case of Courvoisier cognac and a new Louis Vuitton date-book. They were—all three of them—rested and fit, having spent a long weekend at the *dacha* forty miles from Moscow before returning late Sunday evening.

Though Moscow was in the grip of a winter somewhat more ghastly than usual, Petrov's mind was elsewhere. It was the same every year at this time and the Americans were to blame. He whistled "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" as he entered his private office with its snowbound view of Red Square. *The New York Times* was folded on his desk, alongside *The Sporting News*. As director of the KGB there were very few people to whom he had to answer; none of them knew about *The Sporting News*.

Continuing to whistle he sat down behind his newish, antiseptic, glass-covered desk, took a sip of hot coffee from a cardboard cup, and nipped the *Times* open to the sports section. His mind was far from Moscow ... in places like St. Petersburg, Orlando, Vero Beach, Tampa. Spring training was under way, the pitchers and catchers and rookies were in camp already. God, how long since he'd seen a ball game! He could close his eyes and watch the ball soaring against the blue Caribbean sky as the crack of the bat lingered like a gunshot trapped in a canyon.